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The average age of the mothers of daughters is greater than that of the mothers of sons and the average age of the fathers of daughters is less than that of the fathers of sons.

T. E. M.

Vermilion, S. D.

"THE HOMICIDE RECORD OF AMERICAN CITIES FOR 1915,"
THE SPECTATOR, DECEMBER 21, 1916. F. L. HOFFMAN.

Many agencies, both public and private, are indebted to Mr. Hoffman for his annual review of the homicide record in American cities. There is no other source to which one may resort for a general compilation and analysis of statistics relating to this particular crime. True, the Division of Vital Statistics of the United States Census Bureau keeps a record of mortality data throughout the registration area of the United States, but this division is considering homicide merely as one of the many causes of deaths and not as a crime. Mr. Hoffman has used these data as a basis for a study of the amount of homicide considered as a crime. That the only effort to present this branch of criminal statistics for the country as a whole is left to be undertaken year after year by a single individual in unofficial life is no less a tribute to Mr. Hoffman than it is a condemnation of the various agencies of government which should be concerned with accumulating and interpreting this information. It is to be hoped that while Mr. Hoffman continues to fill the breach, by his presentation of this branch of criminal statistics, a stimulus may be given to other agencies, particularly governmental, to appreciate the value of such record information, and to undertake the preparation of this and other branches of criminal statistics on a comprehensive scale.

Mr. Hoffman has used the scattered returns of prison statistics prepared by the Census Bureau and the mortality returns of the Division of Vital Statistics of the Census Bureau and of municipal departments of health. The prison statistics of 1890 and 1910 relate to a point of time, showing the number of prisoners in confinement on a given day. But while the statistics of these enumerations speak a point of time, they really deal with a period of time, since the prisoners were brought into confinement on separate occasions, ranging over a long period. This period is indefinite and unknown. The Census Bureau investigation of June 1, 1890, shows that there were 7,386 prisoners in the United States charged with homicide, or 9 per cent. of the total number of prisoners under confinement; and again, a census return of January 1, 1910, shows 6,904 prisoners who were charged with first degree homicide, and 7,412 for second degree homicide, making a total of 14,316. By preparing a population ratio, Mr. Hoffman shows that the number of prisoners held on these charges was 156 per 1,000,000 inhabitants in 1910, as against 117 per 1,000,000 in 1890. On this basis the assumption is made that "in the direction of the security of the person there has been decided retrogression." For the purpose of

determining the amount and nature of this particular phase of criminality, the value of these totals becomes extremely doubtful, since the figures are acquired as of a point of time yet applying to many periods of time, which range from one day to twenty years or over, according to the length of time the prisoner has served his sentence. Moreover, the probability is strong that a number of the prisoners charged with homicide, involving life sentences, or twenty-year terms, who were counted in the enumeration of June 1, 1890, were counted again in January 1, 1910. The per centum calculation of the proportion of prisoners charged with homicide to the total number of prisoners is likewise misleading. To say that in 1910, 10.5 per cent. of the total number of prisoners, as against 9 per cent. in 1890, were charged with homicide makes it appear that one tenth of all persons convicted had committed homicide. It must be pointed out that the persons imprisoned on a charge imposing long sentences have been accumulating throughout the years of a long period of time, whereas there are many charged with lesser offenses, such as burglary, grand larceny, etc., who have been imprisoned during the same period, and whose terms have expired before the day on which the enumeration was made.

The prison statistics are used only to point the general status of homicide—mortality returns are used as the “most trustworthy” data on the subject of homicide. The point is indeed well taken that there is a very appreciable difference between the number of victims of homicide and the number of persons convicted of homicide. For this reason, mortality statistics are better than judicial statistics in assessing the total amount of homicide criminality. Mortality data are reliable since a death is a non-varying unit, but after all, mortality statistics are not crime statistics, and the chief consideration of a homicidal death should be its criminal aspect. A study of homicide as a crime must take into account other elements than the victim and the manner of inducing death. The perpetrator of a homicide is the most important factor. The motive of the crime is perhaps more important than the manner of commission. Then there are several degrees of homicide that must be reckoned with. Since judicial statistics do not include all the crimes committed, and mortality statistics do not include all the facts essential to a study of homicide as a phase of criminality, there is imperative need that we look for some other source that will meet all the requirements. It is possible that judicial statistics can be improved to the extent that they include the elements now lacking. It may be well here to point out the possibilities of police statistics. The police department is an agency which must take account of all homicides that are committed within its jurisdiction, and record the data relating to both victim and perpetrator, the manner of commission and the motive. Finally, the police are also concerned with the judicial phase of cases in which arrests and indictments are made. Considerable progress has already been made by some police departments in this connection, notably New York and St. Louis.

The conclusion that the single case of murder of a commissioner of banking by bank officials “is of special interest as emphasizing the lament-

able fact that the homicidal impulse is not by any means limited to the lower classes or to foreigners of recent immigration to this country," while correct as far as absolute limitation goes is not sufficiently supported by facts to admit of the conclusion implied. A comprehensive study of the perpetrators of homicide is needed to support intelligent conclusions as to what racial or social groups are responsible for murders and manslaughters. It is necessary to make such an analysis according to cities and other areas in much the same way that the mortality data has been considered. Such a study would doubtless show that the Negro is not alone the victim of homicide in the South, as Mr. Hoffman points out, but that he is also the perpetrator, and responsible for a disproportionate number of homicides, according to the Negro population, in certain Northern cities. For example, the police statistics of Chicago show that there were 33 Negro decedents and 32 Negro perpetrators in murder and manslaughter cases for the year 1915. In St. Louis there were, in 1915, 20 Negro decedents in murder and manslaughter cases and 24 perpetrators known to have been Negroes, out of a total of 71 decedents and 72 perpetrators. In Washington, D. C., in 1916, there were 18 colored decedents, as against 6 white, and 18 colored perpetrators, as against 5 white perpetrators.

There is some disparity in the figures for homicide which Mr. Hoffman presents in "Table V—Mortality From Homicide in Thirty-one American Cities, 1905-1915," and the figures for murder and manslaughter which I have obtained from the police departments of certain cities for the year 1915, as shown below.

	Mortality Table.	Police Records.
Memphis.....	125	75
St. Louis.....	103	74
Chicago.....	211	198
New York.....	258	247
New Orleans.....	185	71

The differences in Chicago, New York, and New Orleans may be accounted for in the fact that the mortality figures include abortions, while the police figures do not. This same fact may account for the difference of from 10 to 15 in St. Louis and Memphis. The remaining difference in the last named cities may be due to the fact that the mortality returns include homicidal deaths in city hospitals or other places in the city which resulted from crimes committed outside the limits of the city. The police figures deal with only those crimes committed within the city limits.

The tables showing the geographical incidence of homicide by states and cities are particularly illuminating. Altogether the work of Mr. Hoffman is very creditable and as accurate as can be expected under the present haphazard system employed in the United States in the reporting of homicides.

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